



Eugène Fromentin

1820-1876

Halt at El Aghouat

Oil on panel signed lower left and dated 1872 lower right

Dimensions : 41 x 32 cm

Dimensions : 16.14 x 12.60 inch

Exhibition : Exhibition "Rêve d'Orient" at the Chateau Musée of Nemours from 27 November 2021 to 27 March 2022



Dimensions with frame : 57 x 48,5 cm
Dimensions with frame : 22.44 x 18.90 inch

Biography

Brilliant student from a bourgeois family from La Rochelle, Eugène Fromentin was destined to be a magistrate. In order not to disappoint his father's ambition, he studied law in Paris. At the same time, he showed great interest in the arts, especially painting and literature. In 1845, he published in "La Revue organique de l'Ouest", a newspaper edited by his friend Emile Beltremieux, a brilliant critic of the Salon of 1845, as well as some poems. It then became obvious for the young man that law was not his vocation. Assisted by Charles Michel, a friend of the family, he managed to convince his father to let him study art.

He then entered in Joseph Rémond's studio and worked the following year with Louis-Nicolas Cabat, who introduced him to landscape painting. Dreaming of more exotic compositions, the young artist decided to visit Algeria.

He arrived in Algeria in 1846 with his friend Armand du Mesnil, and then went to Bilda, known as "The city of roses". The artist was captivated by the warmth and colourful nature. Back to Paris in 1847, he exhibited for the first time three pictures at the Salon: "The Chiffa Gorges", "A mosque near Alger" and "A farm in the surroundings of La Rochelle". These works immediately attracted the attention of the critics and the connoisseurs. Two years later, he won his first medal with "La Breche square, Constantine", and, in 1850, he exhibited eleven pieces, inspired by his journey at Biskra.

In 1852 he returned to Algeria with his wife and went to the desert to settle in Laghouat. During this stay, he made more than hundred preliminary works that would be the basis of a prolific production of Orientalist paintings. In 1857, he published his journey diaries, "A year in the Sahel" and "A summer in the Sahara" in "La Revue de Paris". Fromentin was recognized as a talented painter as well as a great writer. After the publication of the diaries, Théophile Gauthier stated: "Mr. Fromentin has a gift few people have at such an extent! He has two muses: he paints in both languages. For he is not amateur in one of them, he is indeed a meticulous, strict and subtle artist in both languages".

The artist's work was so prolific that his pieces were widely exhibited. Fromentin won plenty of medals between 1859 and 1867. As a non-competitive artist, he was appointed Knight of the Légion d'Honneur. Fromentin was widely recognised as one of the greatest Orientalist painters of his time. In a jury report, Mr. Cadot stated: "Mr. Fromentin triumphs... he has created a new genre of painting, in other words a brand new world, his paintings do not belong to any tradition, any school; he is an original talent, in the good sense of the word, full of ardor and glare, which captivates and attracts by the powerful charm of his colors, the grace of the details and by the poetic feeling which overflows in all his compositions".

Museums

Musée des beaux-arts de La Rochelle

Musée de la Chartreuse de Douai

Musée des Beaux-Arts de Reims

Musée d'Orsay

Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg,

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

National Gallery, London

Bibliography

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A.-M. Christin, Fromentin, conteur d'espace : essai sur l'oeuvre algérienne, Paris, le Sycomore, 1982

L. Gonse, Eugène Fromentin, peintre et écrivain, Paris, A. Quantin, 1881

P. Dorbec, Eugène Fromentin : biographie critique, Paris, H. Laurens, 1926